

# Be Their Guest

*The revamped Oregon Electric Station is an Italian family place*

BY VANESSA SALVIA

**T**he Oregon Electric Station, one of Eugene's bastions of fine dining since 1977, reopened Aug. 9 under new ownership, and people have taken notice. "We expected to be busy," General Manager Paolo Ruffi says, "but we have been beyond busy. We've been overwhelmed by the reaction of the people."

Ruffi is an ebullient Sardinian man who was beckoned out of retirement by brother and sister Raffaele and Rossella Ruggeri, the new owners. The Ruggeri's *paterfamilias*, Roberto, founded an international restaurant group, Bice, with 39 fine-dining restaurants around the world.

Ruffi was the director of operations for Bice New York before retiring to Portland several years ago. "This place is different though," Ruffi says. "It's a family operation, nothing to do with the company. It's much more personal."

*La Ruggeri Familia*, including children, grandchildren and Rossella and Raffaele Ruggeri's two sisters, moved here about seven years ago. When the previous owner of OES decided to leave the business, the Ruggeris were interested and pressed Ruffi back into service.

Walking around the restaurant with Ruffi, it becomes obvious that hospitality is an area in which the Ruggeris excel. Ruffi says, "We call our guests 'guests,' not 'customers.' This is the hospitality business after all."

At a large table in the main dining room, Rossella and Raffaele Ruggeri are presiding over a meeting. Raffaele Ruggeri's accent is heavy, but the word "hospitality" is



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